Economic and Social Council

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Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 22 July 2015

[*on the recommendation of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (E/2015/31)*]

2015/26. Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society,[1]

Recalling also its resolution 2006/46 of 28 July 2006 on the follow-up to the World Summit and review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the mandate that it gave to the Commission,

Recalling further its resolution 2014/27 of 16 July 2014 on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/204 of 19 December 2014 on information and communications technologies for development,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 68/302 of 31 July 2014 on the modalities for the overall review by the General Assembly of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society,

Taking note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels,[2]

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Digital development",[3]

Expressing its appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for his role in helping to ensure completion of the aforementioned reports in a timely manner,

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[1] See A/C.2/59/3 and A/60/687.

[2] A/70/63-E/2015/10.

[3] E/CN.16/2015/2.

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Taking stock: reviewing the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

1. *Notes* the ongoing implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society,[1] emphasizing, in particular, its multi-stakeholder nature, the roles played in this regard by leading agencies as action line facilitators and the roles of the regional commissions and the United Nations Group on the Information Society, and expresses its appreciation for the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in assisting the Economic and Social Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the World Summit;

2. *Takes note* of the reports of many United Nations entities, with their respective executive summaries, submitted as input for the elaboration of the annual report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Commission and published on the website of the Commission as mandated in Council resolution 2007/8 of 25 July 2007, and recalls the importance of close coordination among the leading action line facilitators and with the secretariat of the Commission;

3. *Notes* the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional level facilitated by the regional commissions, as observed in the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels,[2] including the steps taken in this respect, and emphasizes the need to continue to address issues of specific interest to each region, focusing on the challenges and obstacles that each may be facing with regard to the implementation of all goals and principles established by the World Summit, with particular attention to information and communications technology for development;

4. *Reiterates* the importance of maintaining a process of coordinating the multi-stakeholder implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit through effective tools, with the goal of exchanging information among action line facilitators, identifying issues that need improvement and discussing the modalities of reporting on the overall implementation process, encourages all stakeholders to continue to contribute information to the stocktaking database maintained by the International Telecommunication Union on the implementation of the goals established by the World Summit, and invites United Nations entities to update information on their initiatives in the stocktaking database;

5. *Highlights* the urgent need for the incorporation of the recommendations contained in the outcome documents of the World Summit in the revised guidelines for United Nations country teams on preparing the common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, including the addition of an information and communications technology for development component;

6. *Recalls* General Assembly resolution 60/252 of 27 March 2006, in which the Assembly requested the Council to oversee the system-wide follow-up to the Geneva and Tunis outcomes of the World Summit and, to that end, requested the Council, at its substantive session of 2006, to review the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission, including considering strengthening the Commission, taking into account the multi-stakeholder approach;

7. *Notes with satisfaction* the holding in Geneva, from 9 to 13 June 2014, of the high-level event on the 10-year review of the World Summit, organized by the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Development Programme, and its two outcome

documents, namely, a statement on the implementation of World Summit outcomes, and a vision for the World Summit beyond 2015;

8. *Calls upon* all States, in building the information society, to take steps to avoid and to refrain from taking any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries and that hinders their well-being;

9. *Welcomes* the progress highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit, in particular the fact that the rapid growth in access to mobile telephony since 2005 has meant that more than half of the world's inhabitants should have access to information and communications technologies within their reach and make use of them by the end of 2016, in line with one of the World Summit targets, the value of this progress being enhanced by the advent of new services and applications, including m-health, m-agriculture, mobile transactions, m-government, e-government, e-business and development services, which offer great potential for the development of the information society;

10. *Notes with great concern* that many developing countries lack affordable access to information and communications technologies and that, for the majority of the poor, the promise of science and technology, including information and communications technologies, remains unfulfilled, and emphasizes the need to effectively harness technology, including information and communications technologies, to bridge the digital divide;

11. *Recognizes* that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing the new technologies, such as an appropriate enabling environment, sufficient resources, infrastructure, education, capacity, investment and connectivity, as well as issues related to technology ownership, standards and flows, and in this regard calls upon all stakeholders to provide adequate resources, enhanced capacity-building and transfer of technology and knowledge to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries;

12. *Also recognizes* the rapid growth in broadband access networks, especially in developed countries, and underscores the need to urgently address the growing digital divide in the availability, affordability, quality of access and use of broadband between and within high-income countries and other regions, with special emphasis on supporting the least developed countries, small island developing States and Africa as a continent;

13. *Further recognizes* that the transition to a mobile-led communications environment is leading to significant changes in operators' business models and that it requires significant rethinking of the ways in which individuals and communities make use of networks and devices, of government strategies and of ways in which communications networks can be used to achieve development objectives;

14. *Recognizes* that, even with all the developments and the improvement observed in some respects, in numerous developing countries information and communications technologies and their applications are still not available to or affordable for the majority of people, particularly those living in rural areas;

15. *Also recognizes* that the number of Internet users is growing and that, in some instances, the digital divide is also changing in character from one based on whether access is available to one based on the quality of access, information and skills that users can obtain and the value that they can derive from it, and recognizes in this regard that there is a need to prioritize the use of information and communications technologies through innovative approaches, including multi-stakeholder approaches, within national and regional development strategies;

16. *Takes note* of the global report of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development entitled *The State of Broadband 2014: Broadband for All*, and notes with interest the continuous efforts of the Broadband Commission in promoting high-level advocacy for the establishment of an enabling environment for broadband connectivity, in particular through national broadband plans and public-private partnerships for ensuring that the development agenda challenges are met with appropriate impact and in conjunction with all stakeholders;

17. *Notes* that, while a solid foundation for capacity-building in information and communications technology has been laid in many areas with regard to building the information society, there is still a need for continuing efforts to address the ongoing challenges, especially for developing countries and the least developed countries, and draws attention to the positive impact of broadened capacity development that involves institutions, organizations and entities dealing with information and communications technologies and Internet governance issues;

18. *Recognizes* the need to focus on capacity development policies and sustainable support to further enhance the impact of activities and initiatives at the national and local levels aimed at providing advice, services and support with a view to building an inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented information society;

19. *Notes* that topics continue to emerge, such as e-environment applications and the contribution of information and communications technologies to early warning, mitigating climate change, social networking, virtualization and cloud computing and services, mobile Internet and mobile-based services, cybersecurity, the gender gap, the protection of online privacy and the empowerment and protection, especially against cyberexploitation and abuse, of vulnerable groups of society, in particular children and young people;

20. *Reiterates* the importance of information and communications technology indicators as a monitoring and evaluation tool for measuring the digital divide among countries and within societies and in informing decision makers when formulating policies and strategies for social, cultural and economic development, and emphasizes that the standardization and harmonization of reliable and regularly updated indicators capturing the performance, efficiency, affordability and quality of goods and services are essential for implementing information and communications technology policies;

Internet governance

21. *Reaffirms* that the outcomes of the World Summit related to Internet governance, namely, the process towards enhanced cooperation and the convening of the Internet Governance Forum, are to be pursued by the Secretary-General through two distinct processes, and recognizes that the two processes may be complementary;

22. *Also reaffirms* paragraphs 34 to 37 and 67 to 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society;[4]

Enhanced cooperation

23. *Recognizes* the importance of enhanced cooperation in the future, to enable Governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, but not in the day-to-day technical and operational matters that do not impact on international public policy issues;

24. *Also recognizes* that the process towards enhanced cooperation, to be started by the Secretary-General, involving all relevant organizations by the end of the first quarter of 2006, will involve all stakeholders in their respective roles, will proceed as quickly as possible, consistent with legal process, and will be responsive to innovation; that relevant organizations should commence a process towards enhanced cooperation involving all stakeholders, proceeding as quickly as possible and being responsive to innovation; and that the same relevant organizations shall be requested to provide annual performance reports;

25. *Recalls* that, in its resolution 67/195 of 21 December 2012, the General Assembly invited the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to establish a working group on enhanced cooperation to examine the mandate of the World Summit regarding enhanced cooperation as contained in the Tunis Agenda, through seeking, compiling and reviewing inputs from all Member States and all other stakeholders, and to make recommendations on how to fully implement that mandate, and requested the working group to report to the Commission at its seventeenth session, in 2014, as an input to the overall review of the outcomes of the World Summit;

26. *Also recalls* that, in its resolution 67/195, the General Assembly requested the Chair of the Commission to ensure that the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation had balanced representation between Governments, from the five regional groups of the Commission, and invitees from all other stakeholders, namely, the private sector, civil society, technical and academic communities and intergovernmental and international organizations, drawn equally from developing and developed countries;

27. *Notes* that the Working Group held four meetings between May 2013 and May 2014, at which it examined the mandate of enhanced cooperation by issuing a questionnaire and seeking, compiling and reviewing inputs from all Member States and other stakeholders for the purpose of developing draft recommendations, as stipulated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/195;

28. *Takes note* of the report of the Chair of the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation of the Commission,[5] and expresses its gratitude to the Chair and members and other stakeholders that submitted inputs and contributed to the work of the Working Group;

29. *Notes* that consensus emerged on certain issues while a wide divergence of opinions persisted in a number of other issues that prevented the Working Group from making recommendations on how to fully implement enhanced cooperation as

[4] See A/60/687.

[5] E/CN.16/2014/CRP.3.

contained in the Tunis Agenda, as stipulated in the mandate given to the Working Group by the General Assembly in resolution 67/195;

30. *Also notes* the work initiated by the Working Group to review the identified international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, list where there are existing international mechanisms addressing these issues, identify the status of mechanisms, if any, and whether they are addressing the issues, and attempt to identify gaps in order to ascertain what type of recommendations may be required;

31. *Recalls* that, in its resolution 2014/27, the Council recommended that that work may be further continued by the secretariat of the Commission with a view to the submission of findings to the Commission at its intersessional meeting for further discussion and their integration into the 10-year review of the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, to be prepared for consideration by the Commission at its eighteenth session;

Internet Governance Forum

32. *Recognizes* the importance of the Internet Governance Forum and its mandate as a forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on various matters, as reflected in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda, including discussion on public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance;

33. *Also recognizes* that national and regional Internet Governance Forum initiatives have emerged, taking place in all regions and addressing Internet governance issues of relevance and priority to the organizing country or region;

34. *Recalls* General Assembly resolution 69/204, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to submit, as part of his annual reporting on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit, information on the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum of the Commission,[6] particularly on enhancing the participation of developing countries;

35. *Notes* the holding of the ninth meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, hosted by the Government of Turkey, in Istanbul from 2 to 5 September 2014, under the main theme "Connecting continents for enhanced multi-stakeholder Internet governance";

36. *Welcomes* the holding of the tenth meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, to be hosted by the Government of Brazil and scheduled to take place in João Pessoa from 10 to 13 November 2015, and notes that, in the preparatory process for the meeting, recommendations from the report of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum have been taken into consideration;

37. *Also welcomes* the offer of Mexico to host the eleventh meeting of the Internet Governance Forum in 2016, subject to the decision by the General Assembly on the renewal of the mandate of the Forum;

[6] A/67/65-E/2012/48 and Corr.1.

The road ahead

38. *Notes* the substantive discussion on the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit during the eighteenth session of the Commission, held from 4 to 8 May 2015, and the concluded work of the Commission of collecting input from all facilitators and stakeholders as part of the preparations for its 10-year review report on the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, and recalls its requests to the Commission to report thereon, through the Council, to the General Assembly as it makes an overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit in 2015;

39. *Also notes* the holding of the high-level event on the 10-year review of the World Summit, coordinated by the International Telecommunication Union, as an extended version of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum, in Geneva, from 10 to 13 June 2014;

40. *Further notes* the holding of a 10-year review event of the World Summit, entitled "Towards knowledge societies for peace and sustainable development", coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in Paris, from 25 to 27 February 2013, and the final statement of the event;

41. *Notes* the holding of the fifth World Telecommunication/Information and Communications Technology Policy Forum on international Internet-related public policy matters, in Geneva, from 14 to 16 May 2013, and its output opinions;

42. *Also notes* the holding of the BYND 2015 Global Youth Summit, organized by the International Telecommunication Union and hosted by the Government of Costa Rica in San José, from 9 to 11 September 2013, and its declaration;

43. *Urges* United Nations entities still not actively cooperating in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit through the United Nations system to take the necessary steps and commit to a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society and to catalyse the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;[7]

44. *Calls upon* all stakeholders to keep the goal of bridging the digital divide, in its different forms, an area of priority concern, to put into effect sound strategies that contribute to the development of e-government and to continue to focus on pro-poor information and communications technology policies and applications, including access to broadband at the grass-roots level, with a view to narrowing the digital divide among and within countries;

45. *Urges* all stakeholders to prioritize the development of innovative approaches that will stimulate the provision of universal access to affordable broadband infrastructure for developing countries and the use of relevant broadband services in order to ensure the development of an inclusive, development-oriented and people-centred information society, and to minimize the digital divide;

[7] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

46. *Calls upon* international and regional organizations to continue to assess and report on a regular basis on the universal accessibility of nations to information and communications technologies, with the aim of creating equitable opportunities for the growth of the information and communications technology sectors of developing countries;

47. *Urges* all countries to make concrete efforts to fulfil their commitments under the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development;[8]

48. *Calls upon* United Nations organizations and other relevant organizations and forums, in accordance with the outcomes of the World Summit, to periodically review and modify the methodologies for information and communications technology indicators, taking into account different levels of development and national circumstances, and therefore:

(*a*) Notes with appreciation the work of the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development;

(*b*) Also notes the holding, in Tbilisi, from 24 to 26 November 2014, of the twelfth World Telecommunication/Information and Communications Technology Indicators Symposium;

(*c*) Encourages Member States to collect relevant data at the national level on information and communications technologies, so as to be able to respond satisfactorily to surveys such as the World Summit targets survey, to share information about country case studies and to collaborate with other countries in capacity-building exchange programmes;

(*d*) Encourages United Nations organizations and other relevant organizations and forums to promote assessment of the impact of information and communications technologies on poverty and in key sectors to identify the knowledge and skills needed to boost impacts;

(*e*) Calls upon international development partners to provide financial support to further facilitate capacity-building and technical assistance in developing countries;

49. *Invites* the international community to make voluntary contributions to the special trust fund established by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to support the review and assessment work of the Commission regarding follow-up to the World Summit, while acknowledging with appreciation the financial support provided by the Governments of Finland, Switzerland and the United States of America to this fund;

50. *Recalls* paragraph 111 of the Tunis Agenda, in which the General Assembly was requested to make an overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit in 2015, and paragraph 106, according to which the World Summit implementation and follow-up should be an integral part of the United Nations integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences;

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[8] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18–22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

51. *Also recalls* paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 67/195, in which the Assembly reaffirmed its role in the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, to be held by the end of 2015, as recognized in paragraph 111 of the Tunis Agenda;

52. *Further recalls* paragraph 22 of General Assembly resolution 68/198 of 20 December 2013, in which the Assembly decided to finalize the modalities of the overall review as early as possible, and invited the President of the Assembly to appoint two co-facilitators to convene open intergovernmental consultations for that purpose;

53. *Recommends* that, consistent with the World Summit process and subject to the decision by the General Assembly, an appropriate preparatory process be launched, drawing from the experience of the two phases of the World Summit;

54. *Notes* the role of the Commission, set forth in Council resolution 2006/46, in assisting the Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up, in particular the review and assessment of progress made in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit;

55. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report on the stocktaking of activities related to the World Summit, which serves as one of the valuable tools for assisting with the follow-up, beyond the conclusion of the Tunis phase of the World Summit;

56. *Reiterates* the importance of sharing best practices at the global level, and, while recognizing excellence in the implementation of the projects and initiatives that further the goals of the World Summit, encourages all stakeholders to nominate their projects for the annual World Summit project prizes as an integral part of the World Summit stocktaking process, while taking note of the report on the World Summit success stories;

57. *Recalls* paragraph 57 of Council resolution 2014/27, in which the Council requested the Commission to invite further inputs from Member States and all facilitators and stakeholders and to organize, during its eighteenth session, in 2015, a substantive discussion on the 10-year review report on the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, and to report thereon, through the Council, to the General Assembly as it makes an overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit in 2015;

58. *Recalls further* paragraph 48 of Council resolution 2013/9, in which the Council requested the Commission to submit, after its eighteenth session, the results of its 10-year review of progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, through the Council, to the General Assembly as it makes an overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit in 2015;

59. *Takes note* of the report of the Commission at its eighteenth session,[9] including a summary of the substantive discussion on the 10-year review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit alongside a link to the interventions made in that regard, and decides to forward it to the preparatory process of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly;

[9] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2015, Supplement No. 11* (E/2015/31).

60. *Also takes note* of the report prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development entitled "Implementing World Summit on the Information Society Outcomes: A Ten-Year Review", which was the basis for the substantive discussion, and decides to submit it also to the preparatory process of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly as an input for its deliberations;

61. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, on a yearly basis, a report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution as well as in the other Council resolutions on the assessment of the quantitative and qualitative progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit;

62. *Emphasizes* the importance of promoting an inclusive information society, with particular attention to bridging the digital and broadband divide, taking into account considerations of gender and culture, as well as youth and other underrepresented groups;

63. *Also emphasizes* the importance of information and communications technologies for development, and considers that it should be reflected as appropriate in the post-2015 development agenda.

54th plenary meeting
22 July 2015